

# Employers prioritise collaboration, culture, and efficiency with Return-to-Office push

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A significant shift is underway in the workplace, with employers increasingly pushing for a return to office-based work, according to recruitment firm [CMD Recruitment](#). This trend follows a period of remote and hybrid work arrangements that became commonplace during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CMD Recruitment's research highlights a substantial decrease in remote work. Data from the Office for National Statistics shows the percentage of remote workers in the UK plummeted from 38% in June 2020 to just 14% in June 2024. This coincides with a reported 90% of employers planning to enforce return-to-office mandates in 2024, with over half (51%) already doing so.

However, a YouGov poll conducted in May 2024 suggests a preference for flexibility among employees, with 44% favoring a hybrid model and another 16% working exclusively from home. This indicates a potential move towards a more balanced approach.

Dan Barfoot, Operations Manager at CMD Recruitment, attributes the shift towards in-office work to several factors. Companies are prioritising the creation of work environments that foster collaboration and address potential inefficiencies that may have arisen during extended periods of remote work.

He said: "There's a definite change in the landscape regarding remote work. Companies are pushing for a return to the office, reducing previously available remote or hybrid options. I think this is a shock to many who have worked remotely for the past few years."

## Challenges of Remote Management

Barfoot highlights the challenges of fostering effective team collaboration in remote settings. He suggests

that some companies may be struggling to accurately monitor employee performance remotely, potentially leading to a preference for on-site workforces.

Additional concerns raised by Barfoot include:

- Maintaining company culture: Building and maintaining a strong company culture can be more challenging in a remote environment.
- Adapting roles: The shift to remote work may have led to lifestyle changes for employees, making it more difficult for companies to tailor roles to individual needs.

The pandemic-induced shift to remote work has demonstrably altered employee lifestyles and routines. Companies are now faced with the task of adapting roles to fit the evolving demands of remote candidates.

### Job Market Trends

Data from LinkedIn shows that applications for remote roles have doubled compared to the available positions as of January 2024. This highlights a competitive landscape for remote job seekers. Conversely, only 9% of job postings last month were fully remote, a significant decrease from the previous year.

As we approach the end of Q2 for 2024, we've also noted the impact of the upcoming election on recruitment. Dan comments, "The upcoming election is creating uncertainty, which has led businesses to take a more cautious approach." We've observed an increase in candidates at risk of redundancy or currently undergoing the process, happening later in the year than we anticipated, indicating a shift in usual employment patterns.

In the current recruitment landscape, HR, marketing, and internal talent candidates are particularly vulnerable to redundancies as businesses strive to balance accounts and manage costs. However, demand remains high in the tech, sales, and engineering sectors, resulting in significant salary increases—exceeding 20% in some cases—due to a talent shortage.

Dan acknowledges, "Recruitment is tough at the moment, and there is no magic solution. It's about using a strategic partner like us and leveraging all the data and experience we have to help you fill your roles."